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Navy Cross recipient
Omaha, Nebraska

Former Marine Corps Sergeant Robert J. Mitchell, Jr.

The assault on Fallujah began on November 8, 2004 and quickly turned into a bloody, up-close conflict between Coalition forces and insurgents. Then-Corporal Mitchell and his fellow Marines in Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, found themselves in the center of the battle. On November 13, several wounded Marines were trapped inside a house with numerous insurgents waiting to ambush the incoming troops. Mitchell organized his men to assault the building, charged, and quickly took firing positions. Mitchell sped through the kill zone, getting hit as he went. He killed an enemy fighter with his combat knife, and called in support through a small, barred window. With information supplied from Mitchell, the Marines suppressed the insurgents' attack, and extracted the wounded Marines inside. Mitchell was one of the last to leave, despite being injured. On July 28, 2006, Mitchell was awarded the Navy Cross, the nation's second-highest award for battle heroism.



Army Times Soldier of the Year
Anderson, S. Carolina

Army Master Sergeant Richard Burnette

On May 1, 2005, Burnette and his group arrived at the densely-populated neighborhood of Zafaraniya in Iraq, and began inspecting the area. A vehicle came roaring down the street and exploded, severely injuring Burnette and killing four Iraqi children. Used to working 18-hour days watching out for his own soldiers, the long recuperation at Walter Reed Army Medical Center was a tough experience for Brunette. But while at Walter Reed, he became an older brother figure to the other wounded soldiers, helping them adjust and guiding them during their stay there. Burnette has now recovered from most of his injuries, and hopes to stay on active duty. For his service and leadership in Iraq and at Walter Reed, Burnette was named the 2006 Army Times Soldier of the Year. Burnette also has earned a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart.



Outstanding Airman of the Year
Winchester, Tenn.

Air Force Staff Sergeant Timothy Bishop

Staff Sergeant Bishop planned and controlled 120 close air support missions in Afghanistan over a 4,600 square kilometer area. During one 48-hour firefight in August 2005, he provided vital support to two Special Forces teams, calling in air strikes on the enemy that ultimately kept those units alive. For his actions, he received the Bronze Star with Valor. Operations he supported resulted in the seizure of more than 100,000 enemy munitions. Bishop has trained Special Forces members on close air support tactics, and developed pre-deployment training programs. Bishop was named one of 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year. While serving in Korea in 2005, he was selected as Pacific Air Forces Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.